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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord, You have been our Nation's defense and we look to You for shelter and refuge. You have spoken in Your holiness and we rejoice at Your words that provide light in darkness.

Bless our Senators. May they seek to serve and honor You. May their words and deeds reflect an earnest desire for justice and righteousness in our Nation and world. Crown their years with Your goodness as they trust You to do what is best for all.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are not in a quorum call?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. We are not.

Mr. REID. I apologize to the Chair for being a little tardy. I try not to be, especially when the President pro tempore is presiding.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business and Senators during that period of time will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The filing deadline for all first-degree amendments to S. 601, the Water Resources Development Act, is 4 p.m. today.

I had a conversation with Senator VITTER on Friday and Senator BOXER today, and I think we are very close to a universal agreement on that legislation to wrap it up as early as tomorrow. I hope that, in fact, is true.

As previously announced, there will be no rollcall votes today. The first vote of the week will be on cloture at noon tomorrow unless we work out an agreement.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE IRREGULARITIES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have been following very closely reports on irregularities in the Internal Revenue Service's scrutiny of applications for non-profit status. These allegations, of course, are very troubling, and I intend to take a close look at the inspector general's report when it is released.

Concerns such as these are why we have inspectors general. They are tasked with finding and preventing waste, fraud, and abuse, identifying breaches of law and protocol, and promoting efficiency in government. Our inspectors general have an excellent record of responsibility, and specifically Russell George, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, has an exceptionally strong reputation as a watchdog at the IRS. Of course, watching the IRS is also watching the IRS for the American people. I am confident he is examining this issue and doing it very well, as he has done in the past. I look forward to his report.

The alleged actions of IRS employees in the Cincinnati field office would be a terrible breach of the public's trust. Whether they are investigating conservative groups or liberal groups, they should not be involved. Targeting any group based on its political status is

completely inappropriate. We need to get to the bottom of what happened, and the inspector general will get to the bottom of this. In the meantime no one should jump to conclusions, but we should all rest assured as soon as we have the inspector general's report the Senate will quickly take appropriate action.

I have spoken today to the senior Senator from Montana, the chairman of the Finance Committee, MAX BAUCUS, and he is looking into this matter in his role as chairman of the Finance Committee. If the inspector general's report indicates further investigation is needed, I have full confidence in the ability of Senator BAUCUS and the Finance Committee to get to the bottom of this matter and recommend appropriate action.

THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as indicated in this chart, 51 days ago the Senate passed its budget. It has now been 51 days. So why are Republicans standing in the way? A picture is worth a thousand words, and that is the picture.

Common sense and more than two centuries of history dictate the next step would be to go to conference and try to find common ground between our budget and the budget passed by the House of Representatives. The conference committee is one of the oldest traditions of the entire American Government. In fact, during the first session of Congress—No. 1—on April 7, 1789, the day after a quorum had been secured and the first meeting of Congress was held, the Senate charged a committee with setting out the rules for such conferences. During that first Congress, the two Houses convened many times on conference committees to consider many different issues they disagreed on, including differences of opinion over amendments to the Constitution, differences of opinion over

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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